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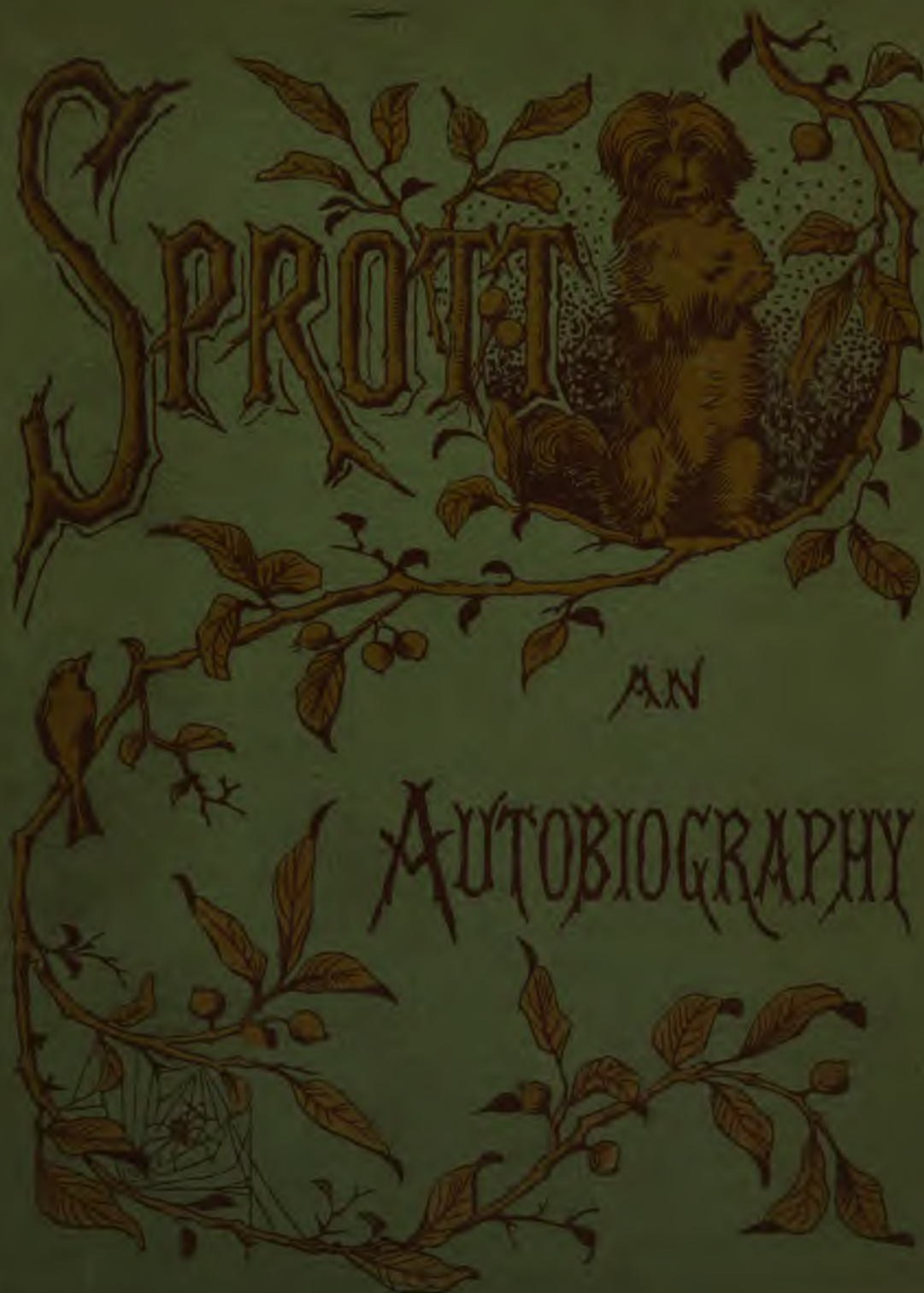
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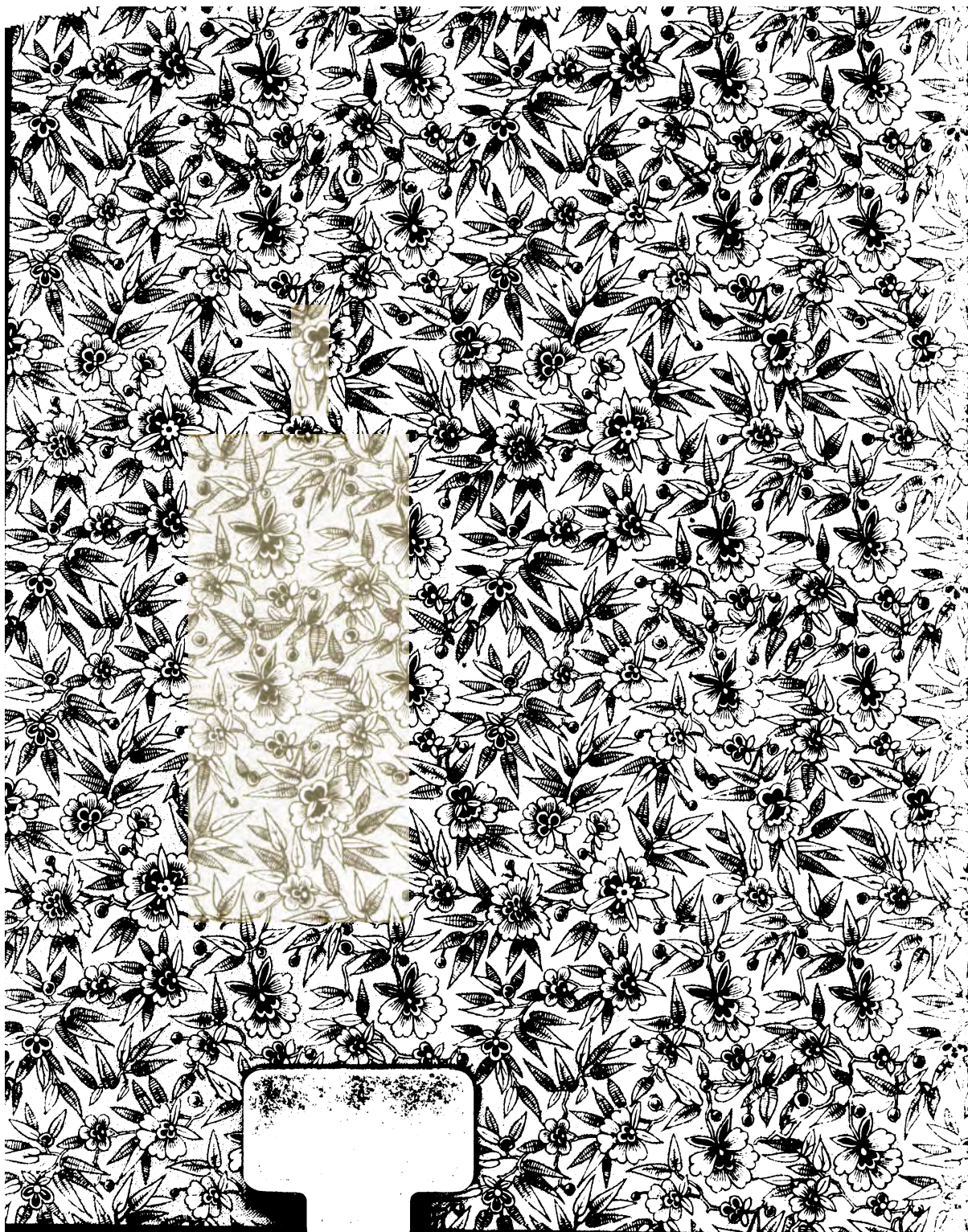
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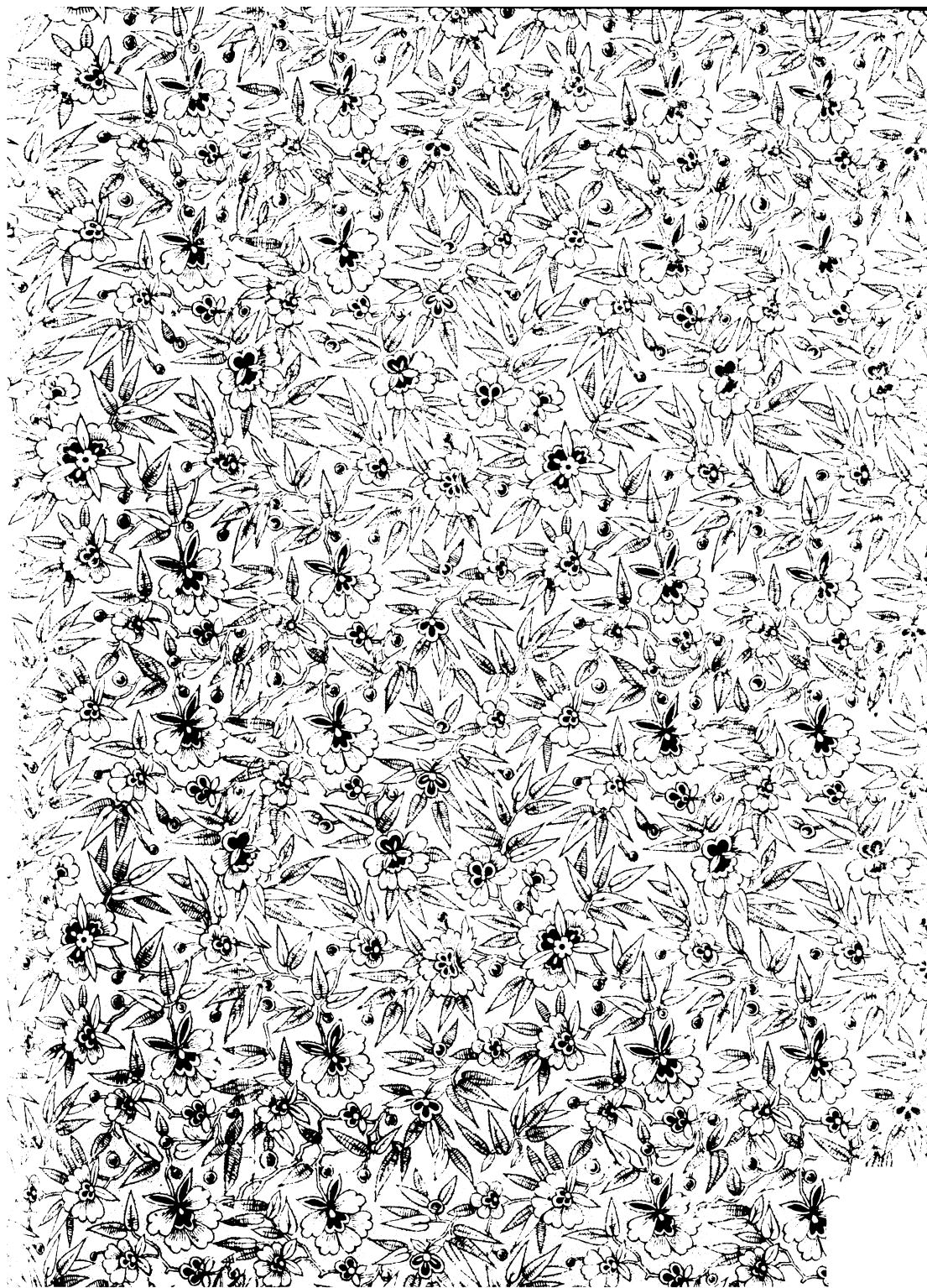
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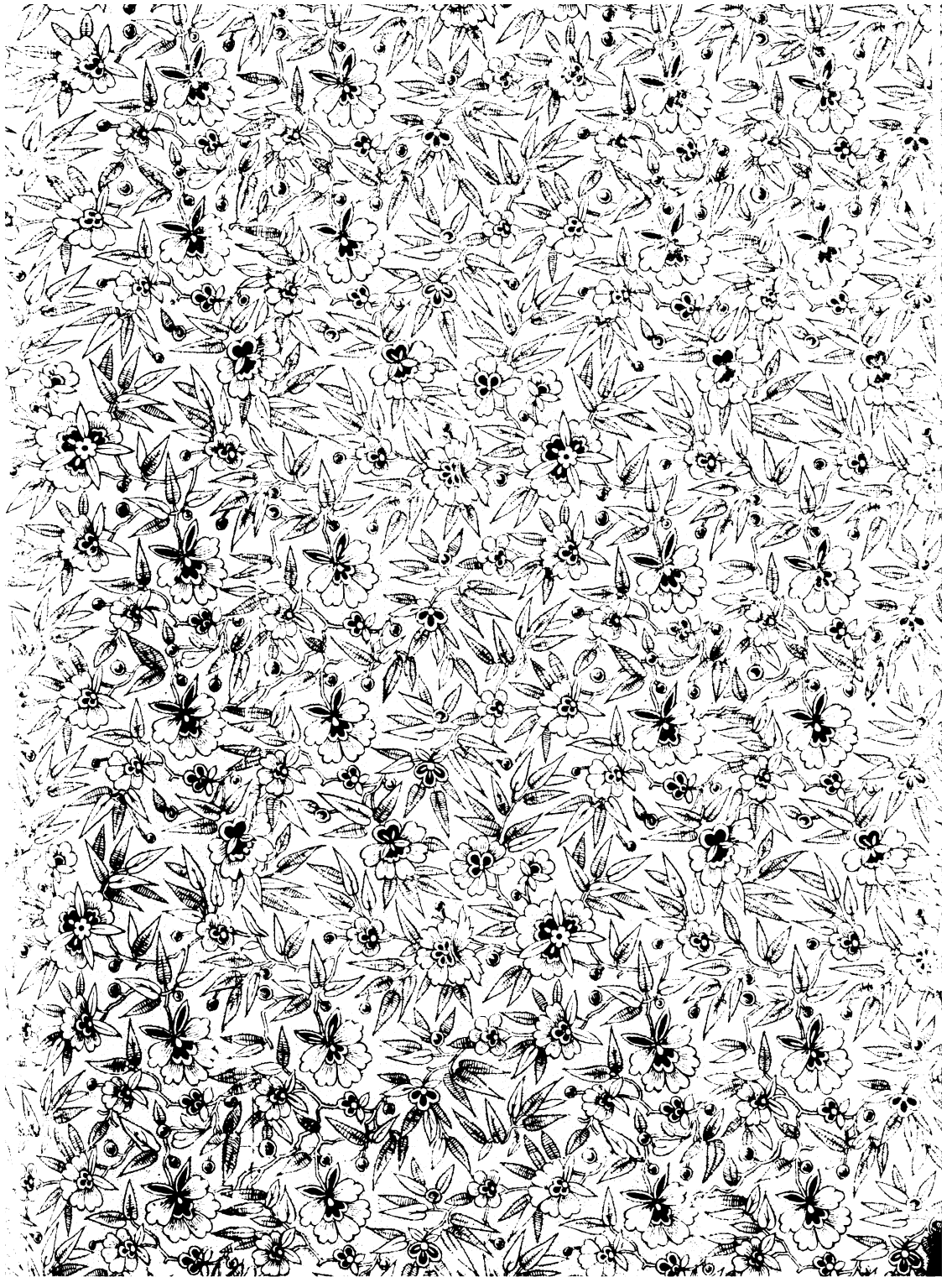
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SPROTT:

An Autobiography.

EDITED BY F. S. A. B.

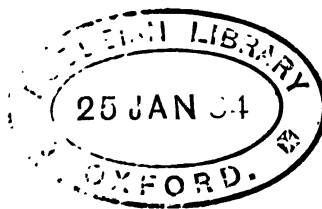


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TO DOLLY

THIS PERFECTLY TRUE SKETCH OF A LOVING LITTLE LIFE IS

DEDICATED,

IN ORDER THAT SHE, WHO KNEW HIM IN HIS LATTER

YEARS, MAY LEARN TO KNOW HIM AS HE WAS

IN HIS EARLY DAYS, FULL OF FUN

AND FROLIC, BUT ALWAYS

FAITHFUL AND TRUE.

CONTENTS.

CHAP.	PAGE
I. HOW I BECAME AN AUTHOR	1
II. EARLIEST REMINISCENCES	8
III. OUR LIFE IN GERMANY	18
IV. THE PURSUIT OF KNOWLEDGE	28
V. SICKNESS AND WAR	36
VI. PRISONERS OF WAR	50
VII. HIGH LIFE	63
VIII. MY PECULIAR QUALITIES	73
IX. MY FINAL SETTLEMENT	83
X. CONCLUSION	94

SPROTT:

AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY.



CHAPTER I.

HOW I BECAME AN AUTHOR.

ONE winter evening I lay curled up on a rug near the fire—not so near as I should like to have been, for I was very cold and wet; but I knew that, muddy and dirty as I was, I must stay quiet and not move from my own quarters, or I should be ordered out of the room.

My own sweet mistress sat close to me; so close, that I managed to lay one wet paw on the edge of her gown, so, if by any chance she went away, I should wake out of my sleep and be

ready to go with her. There seemed, however, no chance of her moving just yet, for she was reading aloud to two little boys who sat on low stools at her feet.

I felt thankful for the stillness and quiet, for I was very tired, and the sound of my beloved mistress's voice soothed my dreams. Gradually, however, I began to grow uneasy, and to feel an indescribable feeling, which I fear is jealousy, as if some other dog was being praised or spoken of. With one eye open and one ear raised I listened attentively. My mistress read on, and the children listened; and so did I, more and more pained, more and more uneasy.

It was the history of a dog, supposed to be written by himself, and his name was Toby. From his own account he appeared a clever, sensible, delightful dog, had great ideas of right and wrong, detailed many anecdotes about himself which both my mistress and the children seemed delighted with; but the pain in my jealous heart grew so great that I could scarcely bear it, and at length I growled, a long, low, deep

growl: had I been a human being it would have been a sigh.

‘Ah!’ said the youngest boy, ‘Sprott hears the carrier’s cart.’

‘Do you think,’ said the other, ‘that Toby was a cleverer dog than Sprott?’

‘I don’t know,’ my dear mistress said, ‘that he was cleverer, but I suppose he was better trained.’

This was too much, in my dear mistress’s own loved voice; my heart almost burst, and I barked loudly and angrily.

This woke up my master, who was asleep behind his newspaper; he ordered me out of the room, off to my basket in the cold, dreary hall.

I think my dear mistress would have interceded for me, but she was so interested in Toby’s story that she scarcely noticed my going, and long after, when I was shivering, damp, and dirty, in my basket, I heard her and the boys laughing over Toby’s story, sitting in the warm drawing-room by the pleasant

firelight. Then they all passed up the stairs, close to where I lay, sad and alone, in the dark, and they were still talking and laughing over the clever doings of the dog who had written his own story.

After they had gone I crept up, with my tail hanging down, my poor hair clotted with dirt (for I had been out with my master in the terrible muddy lanes), and my eyes red with weeping over the thought, so bitter to my little jealous heart, that my mistress should think more of any dog than her own faithful Sprott. I scratched faintly at her door. She opened it herself, and seeing my sad condition, stooped down to fondle me.

‘Oh, my poor Sprott! what a state you are in!’

I licked her hand, and wagged my tail, which was heavy with mud. Then she went to my bed in the corner, and shook it up, and called me to lie there. I wanted to ask her not to send for Toby, that I would try and be a better dog; but I think she had forgotten about

him then, and I was too ill and dispirited to do more than lie down and lick her hand again.

She seemed quite touched, and called to the master, and said she thought I was ill; and he



came, and was very tender to me, as he always is with sick people, and said my hair was so thick it was bad for me to get so wet; and then he poked up the fire, and put a warm cushion

under me; and they both went away down to dinner, where I generally went with them, for biscuits and dessert with the children: but I did not care to go now, and lay in the quiet room alone, thinking if a dog like Toby, who had never seen the world at all, could write a book, which pleased my mistress to read, who read all sorts of clever things, newspapers and big books—books so big that she used to fall asleep sometimes before she could turn the next page, why should not I, who had seen a great deal, and travelled very far, write a book too?

I thought about it much, so much that I became quite sedate and thoughtful, and my mistress said she was afraid I was growing old and dull; just when I was showing some signs of sense! So are we often misunderstood.

Still some things puzzled me. Toby certainly had much higher ideas of duty and obedience than I have. I have always objected to be taught much, for every little trick I did learn had to be repeated so often it became quite odious, and I have thought it best to act on

original ideas ; but I had not much to say about *them* : in fact, when I began to think over my life, I wondered who would care to read about such a flighty little animal as I have been. Still, there are those who have been very dear to me, and to whom I know, and may say without conceit, I have been very precious, who will care to live again with me the few years of my life.



CHAPTER II.

EARLIEST REMINISCENCES.

I HAVE noticed that people who write their own histories are very careful to give an account of their birth and their parentage, where they were born, and when. All that I have to say about that, and much else, comes from hearsay, and I hope it will not give an unfavourable impression of me in the beginning of this story to say I can't remember anything about my parents at all.

I was born, I have been told over and over again, on the shores of the Baltic; and it was to preserve me from the bitter cold of that region, no doubt, that I have been given such extraordinary long, thick hair. As to my pedigree, my mistress, to prevent my being looked down upon, always says that I am of Scandinavian

blood, and descended from a Viking. What sort of king that may be I don't know, but I don't remember him, or Denmark either, from which place she says I came—perhaps at the same time with the Princess of Wales, who, no doubt, is descended from a Viking too.

However that may be, I can't say, and don't myself care much, except that I think it pleases my mistress when people say I am of a very precious and rare descent.

The first day I can remember, I remember well; it was indeed an important one in my life. It was bitterly cold; not such cold as English people know of, but a cold which strikes deep down into the depths of clear lakes, and makes them stiff and frozen, which hangs long icicles to every frozen breath, so that the hair at the horses' noses, and men's chins, and dogs' jaws, have icy fringes; and the wind blows over snow plains, and cuts even through fur such as mine, and such as I was wrapped up in, cosily enough, in a funny, shaky little carriage, where I sat by the side of my first master.

How far we had driven I don't know, for I had slept, and the only thing I can now distinctly remember of that drive is our stopping, and my waking up, and coming out of the corner of my master's fur coat to see what was the matter, and whether I could be of any use in urging on the horses, or helping on the carriage.

We were turning into an arch which led under a house into the inn-yard. What a large place it seemed! How grand I felt when the innkeeper and the waiter, and a boy who took me out of the carriage and squeezed me horribly, came out to welcome us! I tried to bark, but was so weak and cold (for I was only four weeks old) that I fear it was only a whine. It was fortunate, however, that I could even do that, for a nice chambermaid picked me up in her white apron, and held me out of danger of being trodden upon.

Now that I know better, and have seen the world, I feel what a poor place it was we had come to—very small and uncomfortable; but when I followed my master upstairs in the

chambermaid's apron I thought it was a king's palace, the stairs were so wide and steep, and, though they were very cold and draughty, they appeared to me splendid.

We were shown into a small room, very high up; very thin white curtains, with a great deal of red fringe on them in little balls, which looked very pretty and engaging to me; a bed of very bright mahogany, where there seemed a long row of dogs looking out every time I turned towards it; and a huge, soft, down mountain on the top of the bed, and a little tiny bit of carpet by its side. It all looked most lovely, I thought; which proves to me now that I had not been accustomed to much splendour, and if my grandfather was a Viking, his palace must have been a poor place.

My master grumbled a good deal, and the waiter and chambermaid made excuses, and said three English ladies had taken all the first floor, and their boys and an English courier had several rooms on the second, so there was not much choice left; but if the gentleman would

like a larger room to the back there was one still. This proved to be less good than the one we had first seen, so in a very bad humour he agreed upon the first, ordered a fire, and cutlets, &c., to be got ready immediately; threw his fur coat on a chair, and, slamming the door, went away.

I could not say I loved my master, but I belonged to him, and had no one else to look to for warmth, or food, or home, and so I began to whine bitterly when he left me in this strange place, cold and hungry, and alone. Certainly it was not affection that made me whine, and I am quite sure he never could have inspired me with much, notwithstanding his fur coat and a flashing ring on his first finger, and a pair of smart gloves that he wore, and a fine white shirt-front that seemed broader and grander than I have seen since. I know now he was not a gentleman; not because the shirt-front was sham, or because the gloves hid dirty hands, and his fur coat was not the real thing it seemed, but because he never considered others, or thought of anybody

but himself; and he was very angry unless he was treated with great respect, and made more fuss with than anybody else, and all the true gentlemen I have seen since are not like this.

But I whined not for love, but because I was very cold and very hungry, and had no hope of getting any of the cutlets he had ordered for himself. I must say, however, whining was always out of my line, and so I soon began to amuse myself, pulling the little red nobs on the curtain fringe, peering into the corners of the room, running at the strange dogs behind the bright wooden bed, who, however, never came out to meet me.

Then I began pulling my master's coat, and to my great fright down it slid with a heavy thud on the floor. I rushed backwards, but it did not stir; so after a time I crept into it, rolled myself up like a ball, and fell fast asleep.

I was woke up with a great jerk, and was thrown violently against the wainscot. I thought all my bones were broken. My master had picked up his coat, and not seeing me I was

flung out. The chambermaid, who was making the bed, picked me up, and began stroking and soothing me. Then she and my master had a long conversation, which I was too cross and sleepy to listen to, but I knew it was about the English ladies; and presently she took me away rolled up in her apron, and carrying me downstairs opened a large double door on the first floor.

I was ushered into a room, larger and brighter and better than I had ever seen before, and which even now, by the light of all the experience I have had since, and accustomed to many beautiful homes as I have been, still seems to me, as it did then, a palace of enchantment.

The cheerfulness and warmth any dog might appreciate, the delicious heat of a roaring stove seemed to make my heart glow; the broad, splendid light of a gas chandelier making it far brighter than the cold, foggy air outside. There were flowers, and large musical instruments, and books, and workboxes, and little tables, all which I did not quite see or understand then; but in

my way, little dog as I was, I did feel and understand that this was a palace of enchantment indeed, and the intoxicating warmth and delight flew to my head, and I raced round and round like one possessed. Many dogs might have been abashed at being ushered into a more illustrious and unknown world than they had ever seen before, but shyness and I have never been acquainted.

Perhaps I might not remember this moment so well had I not often heard it detailed again and again, and with it so complete a picture of myself I feel any artist might draw me from the description.

Rollled out of the chambermaid's white apron, a little, brown, tousled bundle, with short legs, short tail, short nose, I gave myself a shake, and was soon master of the occasion. I flew round and round, rushed to each stately inhabitant of that stately room, and, without one doubt of my welcome, received the most enthusiastic, that even a descendant of the Vikings could aspire to.

How speak of those ladies whose six eyes

were turned upon me, whose six hands were stretched out to seize me, and who caressed and played with me then, and whose tenderness and care have made the happiness of the happiest dog that ever lived!

What they appeared to others I cannot tell, to me they were queens, stars, suns, moons, everything that is most peerless, superior, perfect: their hands, when they caressed me, were like jewelled satin; their voices, when they spoke, like cream; their dresses were softer to lie upon than any I have ever known, and from that hour my heart's devotion, admiration, truth, constancy, have been devoted to them, and at their wish, with some few exceptions, to their friends.

Two of them had seen me arrive, had watched from the window my puny efforts to direct the horses, and from that moment had determined to make me their own.

Negotiations were opened, through their courier, with my master. These lasted many days; not that he loved me, but he loved money, and finding that I had taken the English ladies'

fancy I became priceless;—a dear friend had given me to him; I was of a rare race; the only one of my family; money would not buy me.

What I suffered during these days, leaving a room and society which was already so dear to me, to return to his! The very smell of tobacco has been odious to me since, associated as it was then with him: his room was filled with its rank, coarse smell, which made my eyes water; and as he sat night after night counting great, heavy, silver pieces of money, the click as they fell one on another woke me up and made me irritable. At the end of the third day he suddenly wound up his affairs, accepted probably three times my value from the English ladies, and left me to their beloved care, with probably no regret on his side or mine.

CHAPTER III.

OUR LIFE IN GERMANY.

SINCE I have heard Toby's life I have reflected much. That dog seemed to be so thoroughly aware of a 'mission' in the world, and satisfied that he was accomplishing it, I have wondered what mine has been, and is. So much I have heard of missions and duties! have I fulfilled mine? It must have been without knowing it. Perhaps it was to amuse my dear ladies: if so, no effort of mine has been spared to carry it out, and I may say, without vanity, successfully. Over and over again I have heard them say they were never dull where I was. I have done my best to amuse them and their friends; and more. Were they ill? I have nursed them; and once through a great sorrow. I have

crept into their laps and licked their faces and hands, whilst their hot tears fell on my head, and from that time a great sympathy grew up between us.

I have often also given them very good advice, which, I am sorry to say, they have generally punished me for, by sending me out of the room.

Their old courier, who taught me English and my first accomplishment of sitting upon my hind legs, called them 'the ladies,' and I then began, and have considered them ever since to be 'my ladies.' One of them had, I found, made me particularly her own, by paying some of those big silver pieces for me which my master delighted to chink.

She was, then, my mistress. I slept in her room, she fed me, washed me, tended me, cared for me, has been my dear loving mistress and friend for many years. I have never swerved in my love for her, though at times, from a slight volatility and too great anxiety to please, I have been a little led away by strangers who have taken pains to be agreeable to me, but my dis-

position is a loving one, and I am susceptible of much affection, never swerving in my loyalty and affection for my mistress.

I have always had a peculiar and extraordinary sympathy for one whom I will call 'my lady;' to others I have heard she appeared cold and indifferent, even haughty and disagreeable, but to those who knew her—to me—what was she not? I adored her; she simply bewitched me; at the sound of her voice I would even attempt to fetch and carry—an idiotic thing, which I never had the remotest idea of really doing. In fact to follow her, to lie on her lap, curled on her shoulder, crouched at her feet, were the happiest moments I ever had. She was peerless, my loved, my dearly loved lady! How often now I long and listen for that voice I so rarely hear!

The third of my ladies was very kind. I truly loved her, and I have heard she often says, I am the only dog she ever cared for; but then I think I was often very pert to her. She was not inclined in those early days to think me perfect, as the others did. In fact, she really did

reprove me, and sometimes rather sharply too. Once or twice I remember her taking up a stick and shaking it at me just when I was making a nice little hole in the carpet, which I thought very unnecessary on her part; and she did not like my gnawing the buttons off her boots: in fact, one day when I pulled her bonnet



off the bed, only to see what it was made of, she gave me one or two hard taps.

I have always thought it was a little her own fault for leaving the strings hanging over the side so invitingly; nevertheless I soon forgave her all this, and we grew to have a sincere affection for each other: it was not her fault if she failed to have that perception of my motives which gave the charm to all I did in my lady's eyes.

Knowledge is a wonderful thing. Words are powerless to portray, except by experience and comparison, this bleak half town, half village, surrounded by frozen lakes and deep, leafless beech-woods: it seemed to me vast and largely peopled. By the light of extended travel, I know it to have been a small old-world town with a college, and professors belonging—two churches, and pastors belonging—two inns, and landlords belonging—a ducal palace, gardens, stables, grand chamberlain, grand officers, foresters, belonging—everything but the Grand Duke himself, who only came once a year, and

only for two months, of autumn sport; and after his guns, and his horses and dogs, and his court, swept away, Tintein relapsed into silence: weeds in the empty streets in summer, in the winter buried in snow, and the inhabitants hushed daily in deep midday sleeps,—an apathetic still-life, at which my ladies wondered to themselves apart.

They had come to Tintein with a purpose, and what purpose could it be?

One October day the omnibuses landed them—my ladies three, three boys, and an old English manservant—in this quaint old German town, which had no particular beauty, no architecture, no charm ancient or modern, which no one ever visited, and few had ever heard of. What had they come for?

The Bürgermeister did not like it; their baggage was so heavy, the boxes so large and numerous, he inspected their arrival with suspicion. Their one friend in Tintein who had known these ladies long, the Bürgermeister called on and inquired, ‘Were they respectable?’

Had they run away from their husbands? had they husbands? What was their history? Why had they come to Tintin, and brought these boys?’

He was told, and remained unbelieving. ‘A strange people these English; but not so mad as that, to come all this way for three boys to learn German! He could not believe it, and would inquire further.

They settled down: the first floor and part of the second were engaged; the boxes were taken upstairs and unpacked; lights appeared in the window every evening; professors were chosen to teach the boys; my ladies went about in the town; their servant hired this and bought the other.

The Bürgermeister inquired whether the bills were paid. Satisfied on that point he still remained uneasy and watchful, and continued his hostile position: but there were symptoms of a general thaw amongst the society—their one friend brought many friends.

My ladies were a godsend to the quiet, dull

little town; they were lively, willing to be amused, interested, and liked knowing and being known. Already when I came to them out of the depths of the commercial traveller's fur cloak they were surrounded by many acquaintances, and from the date of my arrival these naturally increased, and I was introduced to a large circle, who I did my best to please and amuse. The winter was cold, even for that northern region; every day we went down to the frozen lake, where all the inhabitants of Tintein daily assembled.

It was very large: on one side lay the Grand Duke's gardens, and his palace closed, and cold, and white, and still; the beautiful beech-trees fringed the ice, and beyond, through the skeleton boughs, gleamed the lights and warmth of the little town. The Bürgermeister walked up and down in his fur coat, and many of the great magnates of Tintein with him.

My second lady and my mistress skated, but these northern girls, the young ladies of Tintein, shot past them like arrows from a bow.

I ran in front, barking, urging them to speed. I almost flung myself beneath the sharp, razor-like skate, to encourage them: but in vain. They called me—me, who was almost sacrificing my



life in their interests, a barking bore! and added, if I did not get out of their way I should be sent home.

My lady, too wise, too dignified to enter into this rivalry, and indignant justly at their treat-

ment of me, caught me up in her arms, and rolling me up in her warm fur muff, soothed my ruffled and disturbed temper, and in her beloved arms I smothered my rage; and turning our backs on these rash skaters, we paced up and down in a sheltered corner, protected by the great trees from the icy wind, the cheerful voices and ringing laughter from the skaters reaching us, the lights coming out one by one in the early winter's evening, and the pale moon rising to light us home through the dark gardens.

CHAPTER IV.

THE PURSUIT OF KNOWLEDGE.

BUT this great purpose for which my ladies had left their own land and perched themselves in this icy region remained unfulfilled. Our boys were taught, and their teachers learnt English, and the boys spoke no other tongue as yet. I was grieved for my ladies. Long consultations with their one old friend, letters, journeys, money flowing on all sides, professors coming and going, snow growing deeper, Christmas-trees blossoming, our boys learning to skate, flying hither and thither on sledges, but no German as yet!

The face of my elder lady grew thoughtful. 'Tintein was all very well,' she said, 'but they could not live there for ever: something must

be done. Alas! how restless are these English ladies! Everything good to eat and drink, warmth, light, soft beds, and even one large easy-chair, what more could their hearts desire?

Two of our boys were tiresome, the eldest never; but the second, when he should have been learning his lessons, spent his time in making harness for me to draw a cart. I sat in the cart, and refused to move, but that did not make him better. And the youngest pretended to have sick headaches whenever he was made to sit down to his books. Life was too easy for them; they did not work to fulfil their mission as hard as I did.

Through all that long winter I tried to amuse them all. One night they had a party, and I brought in all their slippers, boots, gloves, everything I could find in their bedrooms, and each in succession was received with shouts of laughter by their guests; but I am quite sure my ladies were ungrateful enough to be rather displeased with me than otherwise, for, instead of playing with all these things I had brought

in, they caught them up and carried them back again, and gave me one or two hard taps for all my pains.

However, notwithstanding, the people of Tintein grew to be very kind to my ladies, and the Bürgermeister even seemed to be quite satisfied and willing that they should stay on; and the winds blew softer, and the terrible cold and ice broke up, and we walked on beautiful roads instead of falling about on the frozen lake, and I had plenty of place to run about in, and all that I could want or care for; notwithstanding all this, down came all the big boxes again, and were filled with things, and the old manservant and my lady had long conversations; and at length one day a large carriage came to the door, and the whole establishment, landlord, wife, cooks, chambermaids, waiters, stable-boys, came out to wish us goodbye.

I got in first to see how we should like it, and where I had better sit, when my mistress took me up in her arms and whipped me for making a noise. Alas! that is my failing!

What happiness, friendship, esteem, might have been mine, could I have cured myself of this fatal fault! But, like many dogs, I could not see it; and, indeed, is it only dogs who do not see their faults?

I grew up wilful, and determined to announce every event, every arrival and departure, by my noisy, and, alas! not tuneful voice. Whippings only exasperated me, and added shrillness to the tone; and my beloved ladies, I must admit, didn't quite understand how to make me fear them. What were their taps with their gloved and gentle hands? only an encouragement, I fear. I took them as such. But there was one I did not dare to disobey.

Oh, how I loved him! He was so dear, the very sound of his voice made my heart beat with joy! He had sweet, soft eyes, very like some large Newfoundland dogs I have known; but he was so determined, and so strong and sharp and quick, I could not, I knew, escape punishment if I disobeyed him. I felt my bones rattle when he spoke in a short, stern voice; for once,

when I flew before him down the stairs, shrilly barking in my joy to be out, he was upon me in a moment, and, I thought, had broken all my ribs. Shall I ever forget that blow? It was a great pity I hadn't a few more such, for never with him again did I utter a sound.

The journey we went was a tedious one: instead of soft nice beds when the night came, my mistresses got into a square place filled with people,—it was not much bigger than one of their very large boxes, but there were seats: it was a railway carriage full of men, most of them asleep.

I was very tired, for we had been jolted and shaken all day, but I woke in the night with a strange sensation of something near me that I recognised. Sniffing about, my ladies being asleep, I knew it was the smell of tobacco that I remembered. There too, opposite to me, was a fur coat, like the very one I had made my journey in to Tintin, and beneath it—was that my ancient master? His mouth wide open, his eyes shut, his hands dirty as I had ever known

them, his broad, white shirt front—was it him? It was not either pleasure or joy I felt, only anxiety to prove the fact, to test my own power of memory and recognition. Carefully advancing to the extreme edge of my lady's lap, I was just preparing a spring, which would have landed me on the upturned face, from whose mouth and nose were proceeding the most regular and appalling noises, when I was seized by a firm, unrelenting grip, and stuffed peremptorily into a basket. My lady was not to be trifled with, I felt.

A stern hush checked even a whimper, and I, mortified and disappointed, for once succumbed to an authority I dared not resist, and in my fear fell asleep.

Though I have lived only a few years in the world I have certainly had a varied life, but even as I grew very tired of poor Toby's adventures, it is possible others may be tired of mine; in that case the fault must be in the writing, for surely all who have known me admit that mine was a brilliant and eventful career.

At the end of our journey we settled down again for a time, and I was very glad to get my meals regularly, instead of being fed on biscuits and shut up in a basket, where I was horribly cramped. But it was not for my sake, indeed not for their own, that my dear mistresses arranged to take another house and settle down again: it was for those boys, who were to be educated, to be very hard-worked, to be taught more things than I can even name.

About their work I could have said a great deal. The eldest, my beloved friend—he with the quiet, sweet face—did work hard. He used to put me into a little arch of the desk where he wrote, close to a drawer where he kept chocolate sugar-plums, and then he opened a great many books, and turned over their pages, and wrote a great deal; and whenever he looked up at me I always tried to encourage him by wagging my tail and licking his hand, poor fellow! which he often mistook, and thought I wished to remind him of the chocolate bonbons.

Of course I was very fond of them, but I was grieved that he should think I was always thinking of pleasing myself.

I never, however, refused to take them, as I think it would have hurt his feelings. I was often longing to help him, if he had only known it, he looked so tired and white: I have known him fall asleep right across his desk, and then I woke him up by licking his face. Ah! he was a dear boy; and how we loved each other!

There was one foolish time in which he got a dove, who sat cooing on his head; which was no good to anybody, and a great interruption. I was very glad when it flew away and we were alone together again, and the exercises got on much better; except, indeed, when the two younger boys interrupted us. They wasted their time dreadfully, and were often plaguing us and shooting bows and arrows, when my ladies thought they were busy at their work.

CHAPTER V.

SICKNESS AND WAR.

AND now came a time in which my mistress and I had much anxiety and a great deal of hard work. My second lady was in England with the old manservant, and we two were alone, except our German servants, when my dear lady fell ill, and we two had to nurse her.

My mistress soon got into the way of it, for she has a natural gift: but I don't think I quite understood at first why my dear lady did not play with me, and laid on the sofa and looked so white. I soon, however, began to give her a great deal of attention. They brought her food, which she could not eat, and I always had more than half, and frisked about and played to amuse her.

I think we were very cheerful, but I did not know how ill she was; and when I got a few spoonfuls of beef-tea, or a bit of biscuit, at three in the morning, I thought it a pleasant break in the long night, and did not reflect how many hours she had suffered of pain and weariness. And I was very much annoyed when our travellers returned quite suddenly from England, and a severe rule and discipline upset our innocent gambols.

I, who had been chief nurse, guarded her food, taken care of her shawl, I was turned out of the room at night, and only allowed in at very short times during the day. All was changed, and everybody looked grave and still, and my dear mistress went about on tiptoe; and they all spoke in whispers, and I felt that if I had been allowed to romp and jump about it would have done a great deal of good.

At length she was better, our beloved lady. I was admitted oftener to lick her hand, and when she went out, rolled up in a large cloak, I sat on her lap and gave directions to our dear

eldest boy how to steer her wheel-chair. It was rapture now to know that every day she was stronger and better.

Just then a great war broke out, of which I have heard people talk many times, and to me it seemed quite familiar. My ladies were very anxious; the old English servant was sent to fetch the younger boys from Tintin, where they had been left. There was so much talking, and writing, and consulting, and telegraphing! My mistress lived at the News bureau; I went with her, but no one seemed to have time to notice me then: they seemed to be fearing something.

We had taken a little villa out in the country, a funny, tumble-down little place. The village was hidden low down in a cleft of the hills, and lay beneath us amongst orchards and vineyards; and down beyond these again flowed a beautiful river; steamers went up and down on it all day; and now, instead of tourists, and bright young ladies, and artists, and all sorts of holiday people, there were soldiers—soldiers everywhere; soldiers

drilling and marching, and going by rail, or river, or road; and in the evening, when we sat in the balcony, snatches of war-songs and choruses floated up from the little gardens where the soldiers were drinking their beer, and sitting with their friends—those who were still waiting their turn to be sent on to the front.

There were some ladies living in the next villa to us. My mistresses did not know them, but I had made a slight acquaintance with their servants. As we were coming home late from the woods we saw one of these ladies at the gate, a light carriage with some luggage on it standing by, and she, young and pretty, weeping bitterly and clinging to a tall, graceful young officer, and she was kissing him again and again. I was so angry with him for making her cry that I felt it my duty to snap at his heels, on which he had some dangerous spurs, and barked till I made him go. He took no notice of me and kissed his hand till he jumped into the carriage, which drove away fast, as if he were urging it on; and I think there were tears in his eyes too.

Those troublesome boys arrived from Tintein, and the old servant cleaned up his plate and waited upon us; and we walked in the pine-woods daily, where my lady went to breathe the sweet odours, and grew stronger every day. But in all that hot summer-time there was only talk of soldiers, and battles, and newspapers, and telegrams.

My mistress, who certainly did like to know about everything, started one day to go to the town to learn the news, and tried to insist on my going with her. I knew the way well. We were to walk across the road, down the hill into the steamer, and then walk again. It was a hot sultry, parching heat; dusty, no way-side brook; very little shade; a blinding, burning, intense blaze of the sun; a white, glaring road. She called me—I hid behind some furniture—‘Sprott! Sprott!’ I heard her dear voice and peeped out. Again she called; I wagged my tail but did not stir.

Then the youngest boy must, with most unnecessary officiousness, point out that I was hiding.

‘ Why didn’t she take *him* ?’ I longed to say, but couldn’t. How could I resist her, face to face ? I was dragged from my concealment and forced, to follow her. How unwillingly my hanging tail, my despondent ears, my poor parched tongue, showed ; but I followed slowly about fifty yards down the scorching road, when the sun’s rays struck like fire upon my brain, and I thought madness must ensue. A woman rushed up excitedly to my mistress, and I heard her pouring forth a lamentable tale.

At that moment the recollection of the cool room we had left, my beloved lady’s muslin gown, on the skirt of which I had laid so peacefully, the lovely breeze blowing up the valley through the open window, the shadow of the trees throwing a softened green shade within,—all these memories overcame me, and I fled ; fled from the heat and



sickening glare and the dusty road, and rushed, rushed back into the quiet house, and, panting, flung myself into my lady's lap.

‘Why, Sprott! self-willed Sprott! are you back again?’ and she smiled, not very angrily. ‘And you have left your mistress to go on by herself? O naughty Sprott!’

I licked her hand and looked deprecatingly in her face. How I longed to tell her, that if I had remained longer in that sun I should have become a maniac! But I think she understood me, for she made room for me to sit by her on the sofa, and continued to stroke my head. As we were rejoicing together, I heard my mistress's voice and shuddered. Had she returned for me? Would she insist on my facing again that glare and heat? I shrank back and listened. She was excited; I heard that her clear voice was agitated, her manner as she entered the room abrupt.

‘It seemed only yesterday,’ she was saying, when I commanded myself sufficiently to listen, ‘it seemed only yesterday that he went, and now it is already all over—poor little woman!’

‘It is indeed terrible,’ said my dear lady in her calm, gentle voice. ‘That young thing a widow! They were only just married.’

‘She married to nurse him if he were wounded, and he is dead!’ rejoined my mistress. ‘The first shot almost of this terrible war!’

And then there was a pause; my heart upbraided me for having left my mistress alone to hear these sad tidings, and I crept out and licked her white soft hand, which was hanging down over the arm of the chair into which she had thrown herself. I longed to be forgiven, but for once she took no notice of me, drew her hand away and went on.

‘What do you think we had better do? She has no one with her except servants.’

My lady paused. ‘What could we do? We scarcely know her by sight; we could not intrude on her grief: perhaps, later in the day you might inquire.’

And then they talked on. That smart young officer, who had driven away in the little carriage, had arrived at the seat of war; a slight

skirmish—a shot through the brain—a telegram—and all was over for the poor, bright little woman, of her short wedded life. There were others who had been killed, but this death seemed so near us, so much as if it were on our very threshold.

Later we went down to dinner: the boys even were quiet and still that day, and outside, in the baking hot road, stood one or two people, the baker and the maid from the villa, and they looked up at the closed windows and shook their heads, and she put her apron up to her eyes, and he took her hand and tried to comfort her.

Later on my mistress went to inquire, and as the shadows of the trees were beginning to cross the road, and a faint breath was stirring across the fields, I followed her to see if I could be of any use. The little maidservant opened the door, and when she saw a stranger and heard my mistress's kind voice she began to cry again.

‘Ah! he was such a fine gentleman; and

they were just married; and it is not a week that he is gone; and now all is over! And we have telegraphed for Madame's parents; and she has not eaten or drank since the news came; and she will be very ill!'

Then my mistress hurried home, and with her own beautiful white hands made good beef-tea, such as she had made when my dear lady was ill, and quite late we carried it across, and we were thanked very much, and told a telegram had come and the parents would be there that night.

And then the little maid showed my mistress a letter which had come from the seat of war: it had been written by the poor dead man to his wife, and the writing looked so fresh and vigorous, but the fingers that had held that pen were stiff and cold. My mistress said the letter had better wait for the mother to give her child, and then we went away.

After that we were very quiet; the villa next door was shut up; my dear lady went to sit under the pine-trees in the wood and read,

whilst I sat by her and caught flies, or slept, curled up at her feet; the boys skirmished about in the woods, and my other ladies flitted here and there.

That summer was a little tedious, I thought, varied only by terrible news of fightings, and dangers, and sadness, and I for one longed for this heat to be at an end; and at last we went into the town, but the fighting and telegrams went on all the same.

One night when my mistresses were at church, where I never thought of following them, though I am quite sure I should have behaved as well as many Christians, there came nine soldiers, and bringing bits of paper, insisted on being let in.

The English servant was there, and at first he tried to send them away; and I barked incessantly, flew at their heels, and did my best to support him. Ungrateful creature! he suddenly seized me by the neck, flung me into his pantry, and shut the door. What could I do? Tear it down, scratch the silver, upset

his china? No; I was too noble to revenge myself, but I never swerved from my duty. Soldiers, and in my ladies' house! absolutely standing in their hall!

I tore at the door, I yelled, barked, stormed with rage. If only I could get out they should be made into mince-meat. But no, that most ill-judging old servant had locked me in; and—could it be believed of one whose integrity and devotion to his mistress was undoubted?—was talking calmly, nay even kindly, to this invading army!

I heard at length a carriage; my ladies had come, my voice should warn them of this new and frightful danger. I barked louder than ever, and they heard me.

‘What is it, my Sprott?’ I heard them say. And then they entered. Nine soldiers, all holding up their bits of paper—billets, I think they called them. There was much talking and explanation. The servant opened the door to get his hat; I burst out, but the scene had changed; my ladies were laughing, the soldiers entreating—only let

them stay where they were, they wanted nothing but straw to lie upon and leave to smoke their pipes.

‘It could not be,’ my lady said, in her firm, gentle way. And even I was sorry for them ;



they seemed so quiet and were very young, and they had such pleasant voices, and one took out of his pocket a most delicious bit of sausage—oh, what a beautiful smell of garlic!—and gave me a bit; for which I danced on my hind legs, and

they all laughed. I should not have done this, I would rather have died of hunger than touched the food given me by any enemy of my ladies: but these were ready to go and fight for us.

They all tramped away, following the old manservant, to some little inn near, and when they wished us good-bye they said their turn would come soon to go to the war; and I thought of the officer and his poor little widow, and I felt sorry for the mothers, and sisters, and loved ones of these young lads, who were so civil and simple. But my ladies had to pay for their lodging and food; and when the manservant came back it was all counted up, and my ladies looked very grave, and said it was rather a hard tax.

CHAPTER VI.

PRISONERS OF WAR.

THAT winter was as cold and long as the summer had been hot and tedious ; the snow lay thick on the ground, and soon, instead of the gay little soldiers that had been sent away, trains arrived every week bringing prisoners of war as they called them: there were wooden huts built for them outside the town, two miles off, and very glad I was they were so far off, for I did not like the look of them at all.

We used to meet them in groups walking ; all sorts of uniforms, and such gay lace, and splendid coats covered with embroidery—men of the Imperial Guard, and Zouaves, and Turcos ; little, dark, evil-looking men. Sometimes twenty together, with a few Saxon soldiers, sturdy little

men, with them, who were armed certainly, but few in number, and younger and smaller than these dark-browed, fierce, mustachioed-looking men.

There was great alarm in the town, for there were 25,000 of these prisoners and only 2000 Saxon soldiers to guard them and us, and if there had been an outbreak it would have been serious. My ladies, however, did not fear: why should they? they knew I was there to guard them, and no one should have touched them except over my dead body, and I think our old servant felt the same.

One snowy afternoon they took me, our eldest boy, and the old servant, in a carriage, and drove to the prisoners' camp. I did not like the expedition and barked the whole way there and back, so that any one who had evil intentions might certainly know they would be frustrated.

As we left the town, the snow lying deep across the fields, the dark, gloomy sky, and foggy air, were very disagreeable, and across the snow we saw a line of black-looking figures moving

slowly. It was a Turco's funeral: they were dying, our coachman said, like flies. A dismal little procession, two coffins and a few soldiers. The King, he said, was most kind; he had given them warm clothing, had bakehouses made for bread such as they liked, and there were subscriptions for food, and clothing, and comforts for them. But the bitter cold wind pierced through the wooden huts and killed these poor Turcos, children of the sun.



When we got near the high wooden palisades that surrounded the camp our eldest boy and our ladies got out, for the sentry would not let us drive nearer, and we walked close to the palings, and long lean fingers were thrust through and over, with buttons and carved sticks, and bits of lace from uniforms, and voices begged us to buy, or give them money for tobacco ; and our eldest boy bought several things, but my ladies did not care for going too near, and we stood a little way off till it was time to go. We were shivering with cold, and our eldest boy was laden with sticks and buttons, for which he could have no possible use. Why, in all this sort of thing, are dogs wiser in their generation than men, who waste money in collecting what they are pleased to call *souvenirs* ? Dogs collect them in their hearts, and I do not need buttons and sticks to remind me of those Turcos and their gleaming eyes in the cold, foggy afternoon, under that northern sky.

That winter was a terrible one, and we certainly had great anxieties, there came so often

agitating news, that prevented our settling down to our occupations in the morning—even long enough for me to have a comfortable nap, which, as I often lay awake at nights, disturbed by all sorts of strange noises, whilst the whole family slept, was a great loss to me. Once, it was a particularly disagreeable day, a sort of half thaw, which is most unpleasant in its consequences to my hair, and colder than most hard frosts. My lady and mistress were evidently bent on an expedition somewhere, for I heard them talking together, and a droschky was ordered: the streets were full of slush and dirty snow, and walking would have been impossible; but I don't think my ladies were at all agreed about the advisability of their determination, no doubt there was danger somewhere, I little knew how much.

Without even taking their old manservant with them, they got into the droschky, and desired that I should be shut up. Of course I felt immediately what my duty was, and determined to do it. Having made up my mind, and invariably bent on accomplishing my intentions, I

hid behind the door till the droschky was well out of sight, and then, like an arrow from a bow, I flew down the street, barking furiously and foolishly as usual, in my joy at overcoming opposition. Happily they did not hear me in the rattle of the carriage on the stones, so I escaped being ordered back.

We passed all our usual haunts, the flower-market, library, music-shop; the snow was melting, my poor hair was clogged with mud and ice, the odious street-boys, as usual, pelted me, and tried to stop my way: but I fought on, keeping bravely up, across the bridge, over the half-melted river, full of great blocks of ice and snow.

I kept the droschky well in view, and at length it stopped at the door of a large, gloomy building, with sentries on either side, and soldiers standing in and about a large heavy arch.

What could my ladies be going to do here? Never mind, I was at hand to protect them; and putting my paw on the step of

the carriage, I looked up in their faces and wagged my tail.

Their consternation at seeing me was not flattering: far from rejoicing in my protection, their horror at my appearance was most disconcerting, and quite painful to my feelings.

It is true I was draggled, wet, and dirty; but so may be, and is, the greatest warrior when he has waded through such mud as I had.

Could there be a braver or a truer heart than mine, as I looked up in their faces and said, as plainly as dog could speak, 'This and more would I do for you?' but so short-sighted are mortals, that even my dear lady seemed embarrassed, and consulted what was to be done with me.

There I was, however, and they must make the best of it; so, calling me closely to follow them, and with soldiers staring on all sides of us, we went through the arch, and down some stone passages. I looked carefully from side to side, and saw men's faces peering at us.

What would have happened had I not been there, I shudder to think ; but there was far worse to come. My ladies were received in a dingy little room, where many clerks were writing, and an officer seemed to be directing them all ; he looked at my ladies with surprise, and, I am afraid, was not much impressed by their mission.

They had brought money, my lady explained, for the French prisoners—money that had been collected and sent to them from England for that purpose. This was truly an extraordinary idea, to give money to those men who had given me so many sleepless nights of anxiety, and who were quite the worst sort of creatures I ever saw. The officer politely exclaimed they must take their money to another bureau, in a different department ; so again we set off, and this time we had a guard of Saxon soldiers, who were told to keep close to us. We were begged to walk quickly, and not to speak to any one on our way ; and down we went again the stone passage, up another, and then

to a doorway which led into a large court, which we crossed. In this court were many of the French prisoners standing about, as evil-coun-tenanced men as I ever saw, curiously and idly watching us.

Leaning against a doorway we passed through was one tall, immense man, a blanket thrown over his shoulders, his naked feet almost through his boots, his uniform in rags: he looked so disagreeably at us that my ladies quickened their pace, and I immediately trotted between them and him, and he did not stir.

The guard spoke low and earnestly to my ladies, and we kept close whilst we walked through a long passage full of Turcos and Zouaves, with wild eyes watching as we passed: some fell back, but many pressed forward and stared rudely. Our Saxon guard kept bravely round my ladies, and so did I very quietly, for I was watchful to frustrate any attack, but this was no moment for idle barking.

At length we reached another bureau, and were shown in and received most politely by

more officers. This time the money was taken and some writing given in exchange, and my ladies bowed, and the officers bowed, and the clerk at the bureau bowed, till all their heads met almost in the middle of the room; and I sat at the door, ready to snap at the heels of the Saxon guard if they ventured to go away without us. And then more directions were given, and we started back again; passed through by the Zouaves and Turcos, and by the man in the large blanket, and out again into the wet, slushy street, and into the droschky. My ladies were well packed in with furs and cloaks round them, and I lay at their feet, wet and clogged with mud, but thankful that I had preserved them safely from all this danger; so I sat up and barked the whole way home, that everybody might know we were all safe together again.

A French officer used to come very often, with a Saxon corporal to look after him, to drink tea with us. He talked so fast he made my head ache: but it was not for this I dis-

liked him so much; he was so ignorant and foolish that even I felt ashamed of his pretending to my ladies friendship; and they, I think, only bore with him politely because he was unfortunate—a prisoner, and they had once been at his native place.

Every time he came he used to work himself up into gigantic furies of valour, so that he made me quite alarmed for my ladies' safety with the way he screamed and the energy he thumped his hands together. I felt quite assured, however, when I saw the little Saxon corporal put up his hands to hide a smile, and my ladies looked down sad and ashamed, but not terrified, at their guest.

He used to tell us, over and over again, if only those Germans had done so and so, he, this terrible man, would have driven them into the sea, have made mincemeat of them; instead of which they had pounced upon him, unfortunately, when he was eating his breakfast in a wood. He ought certainly to have been with his company, but a man must eat, and so he

was taken unawares, or and then he always uttered something which sounded like 'sacrrrr!' the Germans never should have left France one of them alive. However, both he and they were alive, and he will, he says, fight better another day.

But at length all the war pageants seemed to melt away, and the prisoners and the camp went, and our valiant little French officer went too, and there was no more rush after telegrams, and I hoped things were quieting down, when suddenly one evening the whole house seemed in a flame, from one end to the other.

I barked my loudest to show them what danger we were all in of being on fire, but they all seemed to go mad together; and even my dear lady seemed quite excited; and this was what they called a 'peace illumination.'

Then came back the soldiers from the war, and people hired carriages and windows in every street, and there were crowds wherever they passed to cover them and their horses with wreaths of flowers. I thought a few good bones

and some meat would have done them more good; they were thin and gaunt, and tired, and such a contrast to the bright rose-wreaths and lilies people threw over them.

I am thankful to say I did not see much of it, as my second lady was ill at home and I stayed to look after her, and she and I were the only sane people in the town that day.

CHAPTER VII.

HIGH LIFE.

AND so it was all finished, and the war was over, and our furnishing was over too, and we were settled down. The boys went to school and the old servant to market, and my ladies read books, and played on the piano, and wrote letters, and I was always with them.

My dear lady loved music, and though I did not at all, I liked hers better than any others: it was soft, and round, and continuous, and did not wake and frighten me out of my sleep with violent thumps or dreadful rattles; and when once she sat down she was sure to be quiet for at least an hour, so it was quite worth while for me to settle down to a nap.

My mistress often in the morning bought

flowers in the market, or went to the library to change her book, sometimes to see a friend. I must say I did not care for these expeditions. I had to sit and wait out in the sun, hanging my tongue out as a signal of distress. People trod on my toes and my tail, and shoved me about; and, in fact, I soon made up my mind that I should stay at home. We had many fights over it, my dear lady even taking my dear mistress's part and insisting on my going out with her: but I managed to escape and get home, where I sat at the door till it was opened. It was quite different if my lady went also, for she was no fonder of waiting than I was; and so she and I used to walk home together, whilst my mistress talked to the old market-women and bought their flowers, with which our rooms were crammed.

When the boys came home from school at twelve there was a rush and a scramble, and we had such games of play, and my best friends gave me chocolate, and I was happy.

But after awhile such numbers of people came to call, it was quite a nuisance to me. I barked

and flew at their heels, but they only laughed and did not mind the least. And my ladies gave evening parties, and the rooms were lit as bright as day; and there were gentlemen and ladies who sang, and men who fiddled, and



men and young ladies who danced, and all sorts of foolish men and women. I really often whined for very boredom; and then the bell was rung, and I was sent to Magdalena, a strong, fine Saxon woman, in whose beautiful white arms and on whose faithful bosom I wept for the follies of my mistress's friends.

And my ladies, too, were they not foolish?

What were all those people who came and went to them, and paid them compliments, and praised their music and their paintings? Why should they have them night after night? And why should I be sent to sit with the servants because I whined on the very note of that abominable fiddle, to which they listened as if they were entranced?

I can see them all now—generals with their orders bowing, and entreating my ladies for one seraphic strain more, during which they talked unrestrainedly in a low murmur; fiddlers scraping; artists with long hair; such a polyglot of languages; ices, teas, supper! It would have been much better if they had sent the singers and fiddlers and dancers away, and put out the lights and darned their stockings, and read their books, and let me sit in their laps warm and happy.

But, after all, we were happy, our ladies and our boys, and me and Magdalena, and the old servant. Magdalena washed and dressed and combed me, and took me down at night to have a little fresh air in the *porte cochère*. It was not very fresh, for she and a big man talked

together under the porch, and when she brought me back, smelling of his tobacco, the ladies laughed, and said Magdalena must have been smoking.

Yes, it was a pleasant time altogether. I had excellent meals, and a warm pillowed basket in my mistress's room ; and when she and my second lady went out in the evening (which, when they had not company at home, they usually did), my dear lady and I sat at home very comfortably ; she with her book, and I asleep on her lap.

She went out rarely in bad weather, and did not know so many people, and seemed to like me and her paintings and her music better than all these strangers. Of all the people who came and went there was one I disliked very much ; he was always interfering with me, and lecturing, which I naturally thought rather impertinent.

One evening there were only a few people, and music was going on, to which he pretended to be listening, but I believe he was making a sketch of my mistress singing on the back of a letter. Supper was announced, and there was a

little dish both he and I liked very much ; but he had some and I had had nothing, and they all came away. I looked on the table and saw many excellent things, all or most of all I should have liked, but could resist ; but there was one I could not—it was chicken galantine, covered, or partly covered, with a most delightful jelly. The room was empty, the chairs stood round the table, dirty plates and half-emptied tumblers, all suggestive of food I craved for ; lights burning, but silence and quiet reigned, only from the next room the guttural notes of a bass voice chanting forth some lamentable ditty.

I am not a thief, I am a dog of principle ; but I was hungry, tempted, and I fell ! I reasoned with myself, but my evil spirit said, ‘ You have been forgotten, the affair is simple—help yourself.’

In writing a biography, before all things one must be frank and truthful. I did not strive against this delightful reasoning, but succumbed to temptation. Lately roused from my sleep, I woke up with a delightful odour of

food assailing my quivering nostrils. Honesty, good breeding, forbade my helping myself; but hunger, loneliness, and opportunity, were too much for me, and, jumping upon a chair, I tried to take out of the dish nearest to me, which



happened to be my favourite galantine and jelly, one little bit, carefully so as not to disarrange the rest, when the door opened. I heard my name called—a shriek—and my foe! He, who had probably eaten twice, nay, perhaps four times as much as I had meant to appropriate, fell upon me, caught me by the back of my neck, dragged me off, shook me, calling me thief, glutton, and

many other hard names ; and, worse than all, carried me into the next room, detailing my offences loudly.

I flew at him and would have bitten, but only grazed his thumb, and then slunk off ashamed, covered with confusion ; whilst he bathed and wrapped up his wounded hand in his perfumed handkerchief, and my ladies caressed, pitied, and applauded him. I, abject and wretched, hid in the darkest corner behind the curtain, whilst my dear lady, my mistress, nay, all three, spoke so angrily, shook their heads and hands so menacingly at me, that my heart was broken ; and that, acting on an empty and disappointed stomach, made me feel the worthlessness of life and woman's love more poignantly than I can describe.

I felt disgraced and miserable ; I never could be happy again, never hold up my head as a respectable dog again, never lie on my ladies' lap, never be fondled any more ! And he, my foe, stood in the warm lamplight, refreshed by galantine, strengthened by claret, nursing his

fictitious wound, and surrounded by my ladies, who had no thought, apparently, for me, their broken-hearted Sprott.

I lay behind the curtain seeing all this, my head between my paws, my eyes watching them, my tail curled up motionless, miserable, till all the guests were gone, even the detested one, and then I slunk out. My ladies were talking, nay, laughing; did they know how wretched I was? I looked up in their faces expecting my doom, not venturing even to lick their hands



or wag my tail; when suddenly my dear lady, stooping down, caught me up in her arms and hugging me fondly, cried, 'My poor little Sprott! I don't believe he has had any food to-day! No wonder he bit Mr. Smith's hand!'

'I don't believe,' my mistress said, 'he bit it

at all; some people make such a fuss about nothing. Let's give Sprott his dinner.'

'Oh,' said my third lady, 'you know he *did* steal!'

'And no wonder,' said my lady; 'so should I, if nobody gave me any dinner.' And so they all three rushed off, and soon the best of everything was before me; and they caressed me, and I jumped and frisked, and wagged my tail: but it was all a little difficult to me to understand; and I still think my ladies were not quite so straightforward as dogs would have been in the same circumstances. But I was forgiven, which was enough for me, and I did not die of a broken heart then or since.

CHAPTER VIII.

MY PECULIAR QUALITIES.

I HAVE been made so much of all my life that I think I must have had some very peculiar qualities; but, though I am anxious to do myself justice, I cannot sufficiently know myself as to speak of these confidently.

Scarlet has always roused in me a most extraordinary feeling, an intense wish of appropriation and love, which was quite beyond any reasoning power of mine to control. Once I was whipped, I am bound to say, without the slightest effect, for dragging from the clean clothes-basket a red shirt belonging to the youngest boy, and carrying it to my basket to lie upon. His rage at finding me curled up on it was quite absurd, and perfectly wasted upon

me, for I did the same thing over and over again, till Magdalena locked up the basket out of my reach.

Once, when my lady was painting, and, I am bound to say, so wrapped up in taking the picture of the dirtiest little beggar I ever saw—so wrapped up that she did not seem to notice his fleas, or his wretched rags, or, worst of all, his most objectionable smell, or, indeed, took any notice of me or any of us, I stole out of her paint-box a large tube of vermilion.

How much trouble it took me I can't say, but I was deeply engrossed in sucking it all up, my nose and hair covered and smeared with red, when my mistress entered, flew at me, shook me, tore the vermilion from me, and scolded me and my lady till she was quite breathless. My poor lady was rather rudely roused up from her absurd devotion to her beggar, suddenly woke up to the loss of her vermilion and the anger of my mistress, who, finally, holding me at arm's length, carried me to the kitchen, crammed down my throat an

enormous dose of salt and water, with mustard, I believe; almost skinned my nose by scrubbing off all the vermillion, and tied me up to a post in the backyard, to meditate on my sins and to spend two hours of unmitigated wretchedness.

Possibly the vermillion might have been unwholesome, but what of that compared to the agonies produced by salt and mustard and water? and yet I was told she saved my life! Never, never shall I forget the agonies of a saved life!

So confirmed was my love of red that a blanket of that colour was procured for me, and in my joy at its possession I invariably tore it to bits. By dancing round it, pulling, tugging, and carrying it from one to the other, it was soon despatched, and another as quickly procured. When dinner was announced I headed the procession by carrying my red rug. Once I did this inadvertently, and, finding it was greeted by shouts of applause, I adopted it as a habit.

Being a Viking's grandson, I have no ridi-

culous fear of rank, and have carried my red rug to every visitor, on their first arrival, as a welcome. As an Indian



smokes his calumet of peace, and an Arab eats salt with a stranger, so does my offer of my red blanket on my hind legs, carried in my mouth, put into their laps, or shaken till they have acknowledged it, been my in-

variable rule; so have I welcomed princesses, bishops, generals, court ladies, and grand chamberlains, and I have numbered these and many more amongst my friends.

What other peculiarities I have are difficult for me to note, and are known to me only through hearing them often discussed, and it has often appeared to me singular that my ladies should be so surprised at what is surely not singular—affection, fidelity, and memory.

To look back upon now, my life had a charm far surpassing the lives of dogs in general, but it had also its breaks and trials. Once they left me ; the house was shut up, the old servant went away, and the cook, who was so important to us all, went too. Magdalena remained, but I was not left with her, I was sent to stay with a friend.

She was very kind, and daily fed me ; she was not my mistress, hers was not my home, but I accepted the inevitable, and felt I had a duty, as a dog of breeding and manners, to perform. I followed her, sat under her chair, accepted, and gently returned, her caresses, when, suddenly, one of my mistress's family arrived to stay also—one who had been always indifferent to me ; indeed, I often think unkind and neglectful : but was not she belonging to my ladies, one of their family, in which my whole existence was bound up ; part of them, even to owning their name, and living in their house ?

My duty was clear ; she showed me no affec-

tion or endearment, but I took up my position under her chair from the moment of her coming, and I felt bound to protect and identify myself with her; and no caress, no bone or delicacy, could win me from one with whom I had no sympathy but of allegiance and fidelity.

Then my lady returned. I, overjoyed, met her with transport. At night she took me to her room, arranged a cushion for me at her feet, put me into it herself, and invited me to sleep.

It was not hypocrisy that induced me to lie down and pretend that all was right: no, it was a wish, a desire to obey her, with whom I have always had that sympathetic link which is sometimes wanted in the deepest affections. I licked my lips, I snuggled my nose down, I laid perfectly still; I said, 'Sprott, be grateful! It is not your cushion, nor your own red rug, but all is delightfully soft, and warm, and pleasant.'

Habits are like iron railings, they cannot be

broken through. I wagged my tail, watched my lady out of the corner of my eye, but content and sleep would not come, I could not command them; she put out the light and closed her eyes: restless, I jumped off the bed, rushed to the door, and scratched.

‘Sprott,’ she said impatiently (my lady has a temper), ‘Sprott, lie down directly!’ I ran to the bed and sat up supplicatingly; she lit a candle, and my wordless looks said plainer than language, ‘Where is my basket, my own scarlet rug, my comforts I had left behind me? I have done my best, but I cannot rest.’

Here was a will undoubtedly stronger than her own; she got up unresistingly and opened the door, and I fled out on my quest. My unerring instinct led me to a cupboard. I scratched, whined, and begged before it. The door was opened; servants had come, lights, inquiries.

‘Bless the dog!’ said Magdalena, ‘what does he want now?’ She stooped, looked into the open cupboard; my possessions were there,

basket, cushion, red rug, even to my brush and comb. I was happy ; they were taken out, arranged in my lady's room, and I never stirred till morning.

What endless conjectures this simple act gave rise to ! Who had put them in ? they had never been put in before ! How should Sprott know where they were ? It was incessantly talked of till some better subject came. But how can I tell ? To explain my instinct requires an abler pen and more education than mine. I can only write what happened : why, I do not know.

These and other peculiarities were magnified by my beloved mistresses into evidences of extraordinary acuteness. One quality I certainly possessed—the wildest, brightest, most jubilant nature ; the prospect of a walk, the merest every-day joy, raised me almost to untamable happiness.

I abhorred dullness and stupidity as hurtful to happiness, to sense, and to a proper appreciation of the mere joy of living. Besides this keen

delight in the smallest pleasure, I have made them for myself and tried to make them for others too.

If my ladies were grave, if the boys pretended to sleep or read, I would stand on my hind legs, carry my red rug to each in turn, or, flying round the room, over cushions, tables, chairs, ottomans, at a full gallop, succeed at last in rousing roars of laughter, and often induced them to fly after me, till cheerfulness and brightness were restored.

All the events of their life and mine are stamped very clearly on my brain, but it might be tedious to dwell on them all; to me never, but to others—who can tell?—they might not be so peerless as they were to me, to their old servant, to Magdalena. As to the boys, no one much cared for their thoughts, and if they had any they were chiefly about themselves; except the eldest, who was tender and loving to all.

He was a dear boy, but for me I think he would have slept a good deal at his lessons. I always tried to wake him up; sometimes I

licked his face, and sometimes I whined; and then he woke up and gave me chocolate, which, I admit, I was desperately fond of, and never refused, though I was pained at his always thinking I wanted my own good, and not his.

CHAPTER IX.

MY FINAL SETTLEMENT.

ALL things pleasant must have an end, and so had our life here: perhaps it was because it was too pleasant, and people never can know when they are well off: in which respect, as in some others, they may learn much from animals.

I don't think any of us dreamt or knew at all what was coming, and it was so sudden; we were all planning, and talking, and dreaming, and what we planned and talked and dreamt of never came, not even to be together as we had been were we to be any more.

My dear mistress used to laugh and say, if it were not for her we should all go to sleep; she must be always up and doing, and know

about everything. So different from my lady and myself, who were quite happy to be quiet together; and my other lady too was happy enough: but my mistress, I suppose, was not, for she broke it all up and went away with a tall dark man, who I had never seen, except for a few days, and had not thought anything about.

What she could see in him that she should leave me and my other ladies for I never could tell; but she did, I suppose, for she went away and left us all, and our life was quite changed. Everything was packed up; my second lady went away to nurse a friend who was far off; our eldest boy was away too; and my dear lady and I were almost alone. The beautiful rooms were full of men packing up and shutting all our things in big chests, and my lady was always sad and tired, and sometimes cried all night, and then was so quiet and silent in the day; and the old manservant was gone also, and there was nobody to look after my lady but Magdalena and me, and we did our best:

but she did not care for anything we could do, though she let me snuggle closely to her, and often kissed me suddenly; but I think, very often she was thinking of some one else—my dear mistress who had gone away.

I watched her, oh, so lovingly! and sometimes I would jump up and lick her hand or bark to rouse her up; but it was a wretched time, and even I was glad for her sake when it was all done—the packing and the taking away. And my dear lady, servants, home, boys, all went, and I was sent to be taken care of by friends—till some future day, they said. And it was all over.

How could I understand it? The empty rooms, never lit now, no music, no one there; and the friends I went to were very kind, but they were not my ladies.

It may have been months, it might have been a year, before I joined them again. How I sprang into my dear lady's arms! how she fondled me lovingly as ever! My second lady, too, was glad to see me; and the two younger

boys were there, much as ever, noisy and rather tiresome. But my mistress, my own dear mistress, had not come back again.

But, oh, how I loved to sit again on my dear lady's lap, lick her hand, and let her carry me about! She had always been quiet, but she was quieter now and much more alone, and she never touched her music or painted. I don't think anybody except I could have told it was the same dear lady of the old, bright time; it was as if some great blank had fallen across her life and mine. She and I walked out often together, and no human sympathy could have been closer or tenderer than the sympathy between us. When the tears fell from her eyes I crept up and licked her cheeks, and once when she nearly fainted, and they all came round her, I squeezed through them all, jumped into her lap, and putting my paws on her shoulder barked in her face, and brought her back, wan and white as she was, to smile at me once again.

My dear, sweet lady! soon I had to leave her. A hamper was brought and some straw,

and they packed me in. She stood by, and I hoped she was coming too; but they shut the lid, and I could not bear it, my heart was breaking. I yelled, screamed, barked, and then I heard her dear voice say 'He is not comfortable;' and they opened the lid again, and she put in some soft matting for me to lie upon, and patted me with her own dear hands, and they closed the lid again.

I shudder to think over the agony of grief I felt. I flung myself on the matting, and sobbed till my poor heart was nearly broken. I felt sure she could not help me, or she would have listened to my agonised entreaties to be let out again. Alas! the grief of parting with her was great, but the misery of that journey was terrible. Thrown into vans, thrown out again on platforms, jolted, sore, aching in every bone, confused by the incessant noise and whirl around me, it seemed countless hours before I was at length carried, still shut up, but carried at last gently, into a room, and set down on a carpeted floor.

I felt all was strange, and was really too exhausted to care what would become of me, and too ill and bruised and miserable to stir, when suddenly a voice, the voice of my dear own mistress, struck me. I sat up; it was hers, indeed. Joyfully barking and springing up, I could not control my impatience. I longed to tear the lid with my teeth; but at length, though tardily, it was undone, and oh! what rapture! two white, soft hands, a dear voice—my mistress—my own dear mistress, who had gone away so long ago! I had found her in this far-off home with all her new belongings.

She caressed me with those fair, soft hands. And the tall dark man was there, and boys who were his boys—and my opinion is, all boys are very much alike; and the house was his; and a strange dog with a most villainous temper was his; and my mistress, my dear, loving mistress, was his, too; and I was his also, and I must now obey him; I who, if the truth is written, had never obeyed anybody before, certainly not my mistress. I had ruled her and

my dear lady most absolutely, and though my second lady and I had some little fights, I rather think I always had had the best of it.

Well, now all was changed, and I must learn to obey my master, the tall dark man, whose house we lived in and whose rule we came under. He was very kind, but he treated me as a dog. I, who had been confidential adviser, friend, who had adored and been adored by three angels; I, to be spoken to roughly, to be thrown a bone in turn with the dog he called Rap, and who, I must maintain, was a low-minded cur, to whom I, a descendant of the Vikings, had some difficulty in being distantly civil!

The rule of the house rather pleased me; regular meals, long evenings to sleep in—which my master and mistress, and so did I, took every advantage of—capital fires, excellent food and plenty of it. But I yearned for the home, the sound of my dear lady's voice, the rustle of her gown; even those tiresome boys, with

their plaguing ways, it would have pleased me to see again.

It is better for me, as I have written so much for which I have been often praised, to admit that I did not behave in my new home and with new friends as my mistress expected and wished. She could not understand what a difference in our social position lay between Rap and myself. He really was a dog of the commonest views. His whole soul was limited to a bone; his experience scarcely lay beyond watching and barking at the carrier's cart; his master's property he valued and defended; but he had no idea, by delicacy of sentiment, to raise himself beyond the stables, and I had never been brought up to brook the companionship of a dog at all. I now found myself face to face, in daily encounter, with a creature twice as strong as myself, who laid claim to my place, bones, and the attention and caresses which had been solely mine. He could have killed me, I knew, but what was life to me if he was allowed to make it wretched?

I think I was punished more, and in vain, about that dog than I had ever been in my life before. One day he was out, his kennel was empty. I laid myself down in it, and took up the bone he had lately gnawed; it was a horrible bone, quite devoid of meat, bare, and stale. I despised it; but by appropriating his food and place did I not show my contempt thoroughly for their master?

My mistress flew upon me, snatched me up and beat me—she did not hurt me the least in the world; but the indignity, the humiliation! Rap, I am convinced, saw the whole and returned triumphant, whilst I slunk away dejected and misunderstood.

I am willing to admit our daily quarrels were my fault; he had what is called a good temper, which I have always thought proceeds from want of sense, great obstinacy, and utter want of heart, and, I believe, would have avoided the snarling, which invariably was followed by my being ordered into solitary confinement. I have often relieved my breaking heart by attacking him

first, and then giving myself up to what I admit was justice, by sitting on my hind legs and scratching at the door where I was to be immured.

I fancy both my master and dear mistress were indiscreet, and trifled with my feelings for their own amusement; for often when I was at peace with even Rap, sound asleep before the fire, they would rouse me to rage by calling him suddenly, and I woke barking furiously.

This is long, long ago, for I know better now. Rap is dead. One night we were sitting after dinner, and they came to my master and told him, and we went out together. There lay Rap, stiff and cold, on his bed of straw. I jumped round and about him, and barked and frisked; they said I was ungenerous and cruel, but I was sincere, and could not be a hypocrite. I had suffered much on account of Rap, and I was glad it was over.

Since then they have often tried to wake me out of my sleep by calling my ancient foe; but I should be stupid, indeed, if I ever forgot that

night, and Rap's last appearance as he lay on that straw, dead.

I have put it all down as it happened, and I do not wish to make the best of my conduct. Perhaps, if it were to come all over again, I might behave better ; but I think not, for I still glow with rage and anger when I think of Rap's daring to take my place by my dear mistress. Still I think I should not be quite so open in my joy at Rap's death now, for I am much more highly educated, and taught to conceal my feelings; but I cannot help thinking I should be really quite as glad. Now I am beginning to grow old myself, I feel old age is not pleasant, and, perhaps, to die and be at rest is the best thing to happen when one's bones ache, and young dogs grow up and take our places in our old homes.

CHAPTER X.

CONCLUSION.

THERE are certainly things in the lives of dogs they cannot explain, some wonderful sympathetic chord, which almost gives them a more than human knowledge of things.

My mistress had a very great friend who was ill, and during this illness her children were sent to be with us; not at all by my wish, for they disliked dogs, and I quite returned their evil opinion, and we avoided each other; but I could not help sharing in the anxiety about the poor sick lady, their mother; and felt with that strange prophetic feeling that has been given to me, more than once, that it would not go well with her; and for my mistress's sake I grieved,

and felt depressed and sad, which she could not understand.

One morning early they came with the sad news I had expected long. It seemed a terrible blow to my master and mistress, and I felt for them; but I longed to show some kindness to the poor motherless children, and for the first time ran to their room, jumped on their bed, and did my best to please and console them.

I don't know that they cared for it, but it was impossible for me not to feel for the poor orphans, who had not even seen their mother again. And yet I cannot remember they ever showed any liking to me; but they were my mistress's friends, and I felt bound to help her protect them.

Sunday was a day of most monotonous quiet. My tall dark master was a clergyman, and by his very face, and my mistress's gown, I knew when it was Sunday. They took a great deal of trouble to prevent my going to church, which I never wished to do, but as soon as breakfast was over I waited at the study door till it was opened,

and then I jumped into a comfortable chair and had my Sunday nap. I was very glad, however, it did not come every day.

Still time passed pleasantly enough ; strangers came, and I brought them my red blanket, and did the few little tricks I had learnt to please my mistress, but much of the old spirit had gone out of it all. There was none of the enthusiasm I had grown up amongst, and there was certainly a monotony which *I* could not break even.

Then came a great change, the carriage had been away and returned with a box outside. Why did my heart beat ? A tone—a cough—I heard. The door was opened. I rushed—I scrambled—I was in my lady's arms again ! How she hugged me ! How I licked her ! What transport ! what rapture ! She carried me in her dear arms. But a recollection came over me : I struggled from them ; even in that first moment I longed to show her my fidelity, and I raced upstairs and returned carrying the matting she had given me herself at our parting, and I laid it at her feet, anxious to show her how faithfully I had kept it.

My master told her I always slept on it, and if by any accident it was not in my basket there was no peace till it was found and restored. 'So like my faithful Sprott!' she said; and for one short fortnight we were together, again inseparable: if she spoke I wagged my tail, if she moved I devoured her with my eyes, lest some hideous fate should take her from me. Watching, loving, tending, we were all in all to each other again for one short fortnight; and then the evil day came, and the carriage and the box, and with one tender clasp of her arms she set me down and was gone. I stole up to my basket, laid myself down on her precious mat, and sobbed myself to sleep.

Then others came, others from that dear old home; and to each in turn I devoted myself truly and chivalrously, even trotting behind a galloping horse eight miles along the filthiest road, following my dear ladies' brother—Herr Rittmeister we called him, in my old tongue. He was not exactly one of us, but he came and went, and my dear ladies loved him, and

for their sakes so did I; so I kept him in view to guard him from any ill adventure, and when we got home I was so heavy with mud I could scarcely move, and stiff with fatigue: but I had done my duty, I hoped.



Then my tall dark master and my dear mistress went away, and she hugged me a great deal, and I am sure was very sorry I could not go too, and a dreary long time they

stayed away. I never could endure the kitchen or its society — caresses at one time and kicks at another, no comfort or regularity at all, and no one to associate with who could at all understand or sympathise with me.

At length there were signs of a return home. There was a stir and shaking of carpets; the old groom got out the carriage, and washed and cleaned it and the harness up; and there was a smell of better food than usual in the house; and when the carriage drove down through the gates I took up my place to watch for its return, feeling that flutter and excitement which after a time, and I heard the wheels, culminated in a rapturous roar of barking.

The door was opened. Bags, parcels, coats, and then! not my mistress, not my master, but a strange and, it appeared, most important bundle! It was not a dog, certainly, and I am thankful to say it was not a cat either. It had on a long white cloak, and a long veil, and was carried by a very dignified, cross-

looking old woman. I caught a glimpse of a queer, screwed-up, red face under the veil, which puckered as I looked at it into a thousand wrinkles, and then uttered a screech, compared with which the music of that hateful violin was harmony itself.



I was so terrified, I ran into the corner behind the curtain, and till my mistress called me never ventured out. 'Come, Sprott,' she called again, 'come and make friends with the baby; you must look after her and take care of her.'

'I think, mum,' said that odious cross woman, 'little dogs had best be kept away; they are not safe with babies, those sharp, barking dogs.'

I hated her! What did she know of my thoughts or ways? It is true that babies and I have generally not been fondly attached to each other; but this baby was my mistress's baby, and my duty should be done whatever

it cost me, even to hearing that screech again. My mistress should not be disappointed, I would attach myself to the infant; and I soon felt a devotion and an attachment which astonished myself—a grief when it cried and a wish to soothe its pain.

One afternoon she was asleep in her cradle, and I by her, when she awoke me by crying. I jumped up; the nurse was asleep, snoring odiously: I rushed across, patted her roughly with my paws, barked till I woke her up, cross as usual, and then rushing to the cradle, backwards and forwards between them, sufficiently roused her at last to bring her to the crying child and soothe it to sleep again. The trouble I had, however, and the density of comprehension, and the profundity of her slumber, did not make me think much of that woman.

The child grew wise, and strong beyond its years; perhaps being and playing with me so much, a dog who, I may say without conceit, has always lived in superior influences, moulded

her quicker into riper wisdom than others with less advantages.

I bear with her without snapping, though when she pulls my hair out by handfulls, and pokes her fingers (long and white like her mother's) in my eyes, to repress a reproving growl would not be possible.

Still we are great friends, and the child is one of the consolations of my declining life; she carries on the tradition of my youth; she belongs to the race I have loved. I have nursed and brought her up and understand her baby ways, and though I do not give her my heart's homage and devotion, as I gave to my ladies long ago, I love her with patience, not adoration.

My mistress has many cares, and her heart is very large, for she takes so many people and things into it as quite to bewilder me, who have a narrower sphere and love. Besides my very tall master and the child, and no end of boys, and several most indifferent dogs, she has also adopted some idiotic kittens; still I hope

and think that there is as much room in it for me as there used to be in those bright days I dream of more and more.

Perhaps I sleep more, I know I do not play as much; it is tiresome to me now to hunt for sugar under a cushion, and to eat it gives me a toothache. I love my red blanket, but my heart does not beat so wildly when they toss it to me now. For years I have watched for footsteps that do not come, and yearned for voices I think now I shall never hear again. How often I have dreamt they are come and start to find it only a dream, and then longed again with a wistful, watchful longing, only a dog may know.

My mistress's step reminds me of my dear lady's, but it is quicker and firmer too. And that dear eldest boy, he has gone, they say, across the sea: he will, I think, do well, for he has a tender, true heart; but I shall never see him again, for I know now that things and days that are gone will never be any more.

I like to creep away into some quiet room

to sleep and dream alone. Only yesterday I dreamt I was rolled up again in the commercial traveller's fur coat, driving through the icy Holstein air into the courtyard of the little inn at Tintein, where I first knew and loved my ladies; and many other days come back in my dreams. But I won't become tedious and garrulous in my old age, only strive to do my duty and love them all to the end; and then when I am gone they will say, 'Ah! our faithful Sprott, he was loving and true!'



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